



IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

Appl. No.: 09/834,438 Confirmation No. 2953

Applicant(s): Paul G. Alchas, et al.

Filed: April 13, 2001

TC/A.U.: 3763

Examiner: Loan H. Thanh

Docket No.: P-4498P2

Customer No.: 26253

Commissioner of Patents
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

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PRELIMINARY AMENDMENT

Sir:

In response to an Office Action mailed on April 11, 2003 (the "Office Action"), and in connection with a Request for Continued Examination ("RCE") being submitted concurrently herewith, please amend the above-identified application as set forth herein. A response to the Office Action is due no later than September 15, 2003. The time for filing a response to the Office Action is extended by the Petition for Extension of Time filed concurrently herewith. Thus, this response is being timely filed.

Amendments to the claims are reflected in the listing of claims, which begin on page 2 of this paper.